



**Massachusetts Food System Collaborative
2024 State Representative and Senator Questionnaire**

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What are three of your priorities that reflect your commitment to a healthy food system for Massachusetts and your constituents?

Priority 1

Continuing to reduce food insecurity especially among our BIPOC communities.

Priority 2

Promote more sustainable farming practices & opportunities including community farming.

Priority 3

Manage the cost of food as it hits supermarkets and tables.

How would you support the Healthy Incentives Program?

I fully support the HIP program and its progress to feed healthy food options to our most vulnerable residents. I will continue to fully fund and supplement this program and its partner participants across our food system including our farmers, farmers markets, and others who work hard to produce and manage healthy food.

How would you support the food system in mitigating the effects of and adapting to climate change?

From eliminating neonicotinoids to protect our crucial pollinators, to eliminating runoff of fertilizers into our oceans that increase ocean acidification effecting our shellfish stock, we are faced with serious challenges to our food systems and to sustainable life. The 2023 summer flood in western MA and VT wiped out crops so extensively that it could be years before the land can be farmed again. These are but a few of the serious challenges we are facing to protect our food sources. If re-elected, I will continue to make these challenges and solutions a priority. Solutions include continuing to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels that continue to heat



our planet, and increase sustainable energy solutions including off-shore wind and geothermal energy. I will continue to make the health of our planet a priority to protect the future.

How would you work to ensure that food system stakeholders of color - consumers, workers, farmers, fishers, business owners, and others - have equitable access to opportunities in all aspects of the food system?

How would you help to ensure that children understand where food comes from, the importance of healthy eating, and other essential food literacy issues?

In May of 2023, I attended Salem Public Schools Farm to School Night organized by the SPS Farm to School Team, Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School, New Entry Sustainable Farms and Massachusetts Farm to School. It was attended by families and students who presented on farming projects. There were tables of information on growing vegetables to HIP and everything in between. The sooner our young people learn about the impact of local agriculture, the better our chances are of elevating this vital sector. That is why I am so pleased that so many students have the opportunity to cultivate an appreciation for farming early on. And why I am so thankful that Salem hosted this farm to school program. Students are immersed in a holistic, hands-on curriculum that enhances their food education. They learn where their food comes from, the steps that go into growing their food, and how to support future growth. In doing so, they develop a greater understanding of the important role local farming has in our day to day lives. It is imperative that we continue to cultivate positive relationships between school districts and local farms. I am confident that by doing so, when it comes time for our younger generations to take the helm, they will create a future that elevates local agriculture for the benefit of all.

SPS is also hosting a DESE Farm to School Summer Food Service Program this summer, where students are growing and harvesting food for the food program, feeding 1,175 students across the program. This is huge, and I am thankful to the partners who make this happen including: New Entry Sustainable Farming Project; HomeGrown; North Coast Seafoods; Change is Simple; UMass Extension; SPS; Teachers & Students; ENSATS; Root; Food Policy Council Kerry Murphy; Waste Reduction Coordinator Janelle Rolke; and Project Bread, for which this would not be successful without their coordination.

What policies or investments would you support to protect farmland and increase farmland access?

The importance of small scale and regional agriculture cannot be understated. In addition to supporting our farmers, local agriculture uplifts our economy and strengthens our communities. Farming is also crucial in the fight against food insecurity. By supplying residents with affordable and accessible food options, we can keep our families and students healthy and fed. For all these reasons and more, I have always been a strong advocate of local agriculture. Since taking



office, I have used my voice to elevate the needs of our farming sector. In 2020, I was privileged to join DA, then Representative, Paul Tucker for a tour of Moraine Farm in Beverly, where I got to see its New Entry Sustainable Farming Project's firsthand and have enjoyed many visits to the Farm in the years since. In 2021, I was proud to work with my Senate colleagues to pass an ARPA spending bill that included \$4mil for agricultural fairs recovery. Likewise, I regularly attend the Essex County Farm Bureau's Legislative Breakfast alongside my legislative colleagues. This Session, I am proud to serve on the newly formed Joint Committee on Agriculture and have greatly enjoyed hearing from our farmers and discussing their needs and how we can work together to achieve these goals. And saving our farm land from development is crucial to our farming future. I am seeing too many farms developed into housing or commercial use, never to be farmed again. While we do have a housing crisis, we should not be turning to farmland to solve that crisis. But we also see farms that are not sustainable and expensive to manage, so owners have no choice but to sell. I am particularly interested in seeing MDAR establish a buy/hold/sell program. I believe this will have a direct effect on preserving our farmland and farming future and I support this initiative whole-heartedly.

What strategies would you support to reduce food waste?

We should teach techniques to maintain longer shelf life of perishable foods with proper storage, freezing and the canning process. By extending the shelf life of foods for future use, we can reduce the impact on our waste stream. Perhaps canning could be done at a community level to share equipment. And, reduce equipment cost to encourage canning and preserving food. Composting is also critical and many families do not know how to compost compostable food and paper items. Teaching these basic techniques at the community level can have a positive impact. These are but a few ideas to impact our waste stream.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Yes, thank you. As I stated before, the importance of small-scale and regional agriculture is critical to our state. Supporting local agriculture strengthens our economy. Farming is also crucial in the fight against food insecurity. By supplying residents with affordable and accessible food options, we can keep our families healthy and fed. For all these reasons and more, I have always been a strong advocate of local agriculture. Since taking office, I have used my voice to elevate the needs of our farming sector, and was finally appointed to the newly formed Joint Committee on Agriculture. I have visited farms in and out of my district to hear directly from farmers on what they need to thrive and survive. As stated previously, I regularly attend the Essex County Farm Bureau's Legislative Breakfast alongside my legislative colleagues to again listen and learn so we can properly support our agriculture industry, both large and small, here in Massachusetts. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this questionnaire. It is greatly appreciated. Best regards, Joan